Tape Number 34-19-1-00

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

Helen Ing (HI)

Honolulu, O'ahu

June 8, 2000

BY: Holly Yamada (HY)

HY: Okay, this is an interview with Helen Ing. We're at her home [in Dowsett Highlands] and it's June 8, 2000 and the interviewer is Holly Yamada.

Okay. Let's just start with, what's your birth [year]?

HI: Okay.

HY: When were you born?

HI: Nineteen ten.

HY: Okay, and where were you born?

HI: I was born in Honolulu.

HY: In Honolulu?

HI: I was writing that down too. Kauluwela Lane. You know where Kauluwela School is? In that area there. Because when my father [Heu, Fook Sang] came from China, he lived with my cousins who had come several years ahead of time. Then he worked one year on the plantation and then came to town and started his tailor shop in town.

HY: You say he worked one year on the plantation.

HI: He had to because they came as plantation workers.

HY: So he was an adult, a young adult, when he came.

HI: He was an adult. And here's something. I don't know if I should even tell you. I wrote it down for our own family. He is the only person in town who knows how to set—this is off record—broken bones without the cast. [HI later agrees to go on record.] People used to come to our house with the cast on. When they fall down, they break their bones, go to the doctor, put cast on. He takes a hammer and crack the cast off and put his own poultice on, and the bone would heal.

All the firemen and policemen used to come to him. All on the q.t. He didn't have a license. We had to help him make all the poultices. He used to get the herbs from China. I'm number one, my sister's number two, and number three is a brother. [HI's father] wanted him to go back to China to learn about that. Damn fool wouldn't go. I said if he offered to me I would have gone.

HY: Do you know why your brother didn't want to go and learn this?

HI: He's stupid. He went to Shanghai. We sent him to Shanghai to St. John's College. All he learned to do was drink and gamble.

HY: So he just wasn't interested.

HI: He just wasn't interested.

HY: So you said you were the oldest?

HI: I was the oldest . . .

HY: How many siblings?

HI: There were thirteen of us, so twelve.

HY: Twelve brothers and sisters.

HI: Number two, my sister, and number three have died. They died about five, six years ago. Here I am, still going strong at ninety.

HY: You said your father owned, after he worked one year at the plantation . . .

HI: He owned a tailor shop.

HY: Do you know how he acquired the tailor shop?

HI: He learned tailoring in China, and he just came and rented a store from Linc[oln] McCandless. He was there until about, oh. . . . Then he had to move to Smith Street because McCandless sold the building. I used to go down there every Saturday on the streetcar. In the old days we had buggies, yeah? The factory used to be—I used to stand out in the window and watch the bread dough go through all the different processes till it baked. Then Love's Bakery had closed down, went to Kapahulu [Avenue], and that's where they are now.

HY: What's the name of the tailor shop?

HI: Heu Fook Sang. So firemen all used to call him "Fook Sang, Fook Sang." Heu is the surname, but being Chinese, the surname comes first and your given name comes afterwards. So people always thought our surname was Sang. No it's Heu, H-E-U. But those are really early days.

HY: Do you know anything about how he acquired the shop? You said he rented from McCandless.

HI: He just rented it from McCandless. Funny, it was real funny. You know it's still there, the

building. I think, yeah, it's still there. He had the corner, and the bakery was right next to the corner. I don't know how come they didn't use the corner, but he was able to rent that area, and he stayed until Love's Bakery moved. Then he moved to Smith Street. Oh what building is that now? I don't know. That was the building for sale. That was a time when they had all kinds of gambling and it was the red light district. We had a chance to buy that building, but he decided against it. Now, I don't know, wait now, who owns it? I used to know who owned it. This guy who bought it made a mint. He stayed there for I don't know remember how many years. Then he had a heart attack. I don't even remember when he died.

HY: Did anybody in your family continue then?

HI: No, the tailor shop finished, and that was it.

HY: Were there other things he did there besides tailoring?

HI: Well, he did this bone thing on the side. Looking back now, I think he made more money and—he couldn't charge a fee, but people used to bring him *li see,* you know, wrapped up. When they were healed, they would bring to us all good stuff to eat. They would bring us a pair of chickens, a big slab of roast pork, and *manapua.* I remember as a child we used to get that every time he finished healing somebody. Most of them were Chinese, too, see. So they go by the Chinese custom. But that's all done.

HY: And you say you learned a little bit of how to make the poultice for that.

HI: I still know how to do it, if I can get the ingredients. (Chuckles) Take a chicken, kill it, and then pound the—you get powder from Downtown. I don't know if that store still has it. That store is still there, Chee Wo Tong. The man there used to have the recipe. You pound it and you put—do you know what *ʻōkolehao* is? They used to make it out of rice illegally in town. It's white. You used to pound the chicken with that powder, and then add that on to make it moist. But oh, I don't know. So that's all lost. Nobody does that now.

HY: That's too bad.

HI: Although in Chinatown, they tell me they can still buy liquid that you can rub. I don't know who makes it. But we had to send for all the herbs from China all the time. Then the Japanese war [World War II] came and they bombed. We had a building in Hong Kong. When the Japanese came, they bombed the whole thing down.

HY: It was family-owned building?

HI: He owned.

HY: So did he continue to. . . .

HI: I think after the war, there was some kind of [compensation] . . . . Off the record.

HY: Oh, okay. Okay. So maybe you can talk about your mother's background.

HI: My mother [Heu, See Kyau Ling] was born in Kohala. So she was a natural-born citizen.

HY: Do you know how your parents met?

HI: I think they had a go-between. I don't quite remember because I just hear from what they tell us. But you know, the old days, they had go-betweens, matchmakers we call them.

HY: Did you know your maternal grandparents?

HI: Yes, they're the only ones I knew. Because my father had an older brother in China and he had a son, he was forever sending money back to him in China. When the Japanese war came, he disappeared so we don't where he is. Let's see, Ah Fat, and he must be older than me. We just lost track of him. Because even after my father died, my mother used to send money back to China to him.

HY: Now where were you folks living when you were growing up? Where was the family home?

HI: Let's see, in 1915 these people, my cousins we were living with, bought a lot on [South] King Street. We bought the next one, the corner lot. We were there from, must be just before 1915, because my sister and I were born up here, Kauluwela Lane, and she was born on Vineyard Street. Then my brother, 1915, was born at King Street, King and Palm Drive. We lived there forever until my father died. We still have that lot there. We're still collecting rent on it.

HY: Can you describe the house?

HI: Which house?

HY: The house on King Street that you grew up in.

HI: An old-fashioned cracker box thing. There was a store in front and then the living quarters were in the back of the store. That's how most of the houses were then. Then we had a chicken farm in the backyard. Raised chickens and gathered eggs and had our own chickens. We got rid of that and we built a house, a second house there. We never did sell the store, we always rented it out to different people. The Kau family, and then my uncle had it a while. Then I was at McKinley High School. Because I used to remember studying in front and then keeping the books, you know. I keep it in English, write down how much, whatever we brought for the store, then count the receipts, how much we collected that day. I would have to transcribe my English to him. And he would keep it in Chinese, my father would.

HY: So this is the store, another store besides the tailor shop?

HI: Tailor shop was Downtown. And this is where we lived, King Street.

HY: But the store was owned by your uncle?

HI: No, the building was owned by us and we rented the store to him to run, the store space.

HY: Oh, I see. And what kind of business was the store?

HI: McKinley High School students used to come there to eat lunch and everything, so he was a cook. He probably made *chow fun* or what I don't know. But I used to remember that they'd

come.

HY: Do you remember what he called it? The name?

HI: I don't quite remember except that after my father gave up his tailor shop there, we took over the store. My mother and I ran it. Then he moved to Smith Street. He did the tailoring at Smith Street. We would take care [of the store]. In fact, from the fourth sister down, they used to help run the store. My sister went to McKinley. So I finished in '28, and I think she's finished in '29 or '30. Right away they gave her a job as secretary at the Department of Education [at that time called Department of Public Instruction]. Who was it? Was it [Oren E.] Long who was superintendent? She was hired right away and she worked. In fact, she was the first one of us who went to work because I refused to stop after high school. I continued at the university.

HY: Maybe you can continue describing that, your family home. You said the living space was behind the store, and you had chickens outside.

HI: In the back.

HY: In the back.

HI: When we gave up raising chickens and gathering eggs, we built the house with the basement to live. They rented the top level. Half of us lived downstairs and the other half still lived behind the store because we had so many children by then, huh?

HY: How was the sleeping arrangement?

HI: We had . . .

HY: You had a room with your brothers and sisters?

HI: Three bedrooms. It was divided. There was a kitchen, bathroom. And yeah, I stayed there until I got married in '32. And then what happened? We had to tear that house down afterwards, too. Oh, he bought another piece of property at Punahou service station. We still own that. We're renting it, renting the service station out. We're still collecting money in rent, and it's divided. Let's see, it's divided certain ways 'cause we even give my brother's children one share. My sister in her will gave her share to my youngest sister's daughter.

HY: To her niece.

HI: Yeah, to her niece, 'cause when my sister had her—what happened now? Did she continue in school? In fact she had her before she went to college or something, I don't know. I can't remember the details. She raised that girl as her daughter. In other words, I think she was illegitimate. I don't know, didn't know then, but I think now.

HY: Yeah, in retrospect.

HI: Uh huh [Yes].

HY: Well, maybe you could talk a little bit about the store when you started helping out in the store.

You said the McKinley students would come and . . .

HI: Buy *chow fun*. Little packages, I remember, five cents. In those old days, bread was five cents a loaf.

HY: What other things did you sell there?

HI: *Crack seed,* package only five cents. Now you cannot even buy one seed for five cents. So those were the days.

HY: Who else were your customers besides McKinley High School students?

HI: Oh there was Okumura home. I think you know, Okumura is very famous, Takie Okumura. He used to have a boarding school for Japanese students [Japanese Christian Boarding School] from all the islands. They would come over and buy stuff. And then the neighborhood—you know the Fernandes?

HY: I'm sorry?

HI: Fernandes, the guy who runs the rides at. . . . ?

HY: Mm hmm.

HI: He used to be our good customer. He used to live right down on King Street. Now the son, I think—can't think of his name—he's doing all the fairs and all of that, huh?

HY: Did you sell produce in your store, too?

HI: No. It was just *crack seed,* bread, milk. They used to deliver. Dairymen used to have the horse and buggy deliver the milk to the stores. And used to be glass bottles, you didn't have cartons. In fact, I wonder, I think I saved one but I can't find it now.

HY: You said you did the books there? Is that right? What was your job?

HI: Well, storekeepers, you might call it. My mother, she only went through third grade in Kohala. So we were teaching her, but she knew enough to write figures. How much she paid for the bread that day and all of that. I have to translate it to my father who wrote it and kept it in Chinese. I don't think that we ever made a profit because we ate more than we sold.

(Laughter)

HY: A lot of mouths to feed with thirteen kids.

HI: That's why we, what you call the. . . . Most the firemen used to go to have him set their bones. He used to make pongee suits for [Secretary of the Territory of Hawai'i] Raymond C. Brown. I don't know what they call him then, I forget, but would be the lieutenant governor now. He would wear nothing but pongee suits and my father had to import pongee from China to make his suits. As a child, my mother and I had to soak that to shrink it. Soak it, hang it on the line to dry, roll it up, and have to take it down. He only wore pongee suits and nothing else.

HY: I don't know what pongee is. It's a type of fabric?

HI: It's just like khaki but it's made with the silk threads from China. I have a piece left in my trunk, but I have so much things piled in my trunk I don't even bring that out. We used to import a lot of silk from China.

HY: And so the war kind of affected that.

HI: That's gone.

HY: Did you learn tailoring, any tailoring?

HI: All I learned was how to hem. My mother would do most of the hemming. When she got too busy I had to, like the sleeves were lined and we have to hem the ends and hem the seams. He did all the big work, and we did all the handwork. He would bring the suits home, we do the handwork, and he'd take it back down.

HY: Did he do women's clothing, too?

HI: No, just men's suits and khaki pants. Because the firemen at that time, I think, wore khaki pants. And that, we also had to shrink. We have to shrink bolts and bolts of it, huh? It was left just to my mother and me. We would have to hang it on the line, dry it, roll it up, and he'd take it down to the tailor shop.

HY: Was it just him that the worked in the tailor shop?

HI: He had two men with him. I think they were from China, too. I don't remember.

HY: Now is this a Western-style suit?

HI: Yes.

HY: Like a business suit?

HI: Yes, yes. But I still marvel at those times when I think of it. After I do this I think I should give it—if you're going to have this part in—my niece came once already and she taped [me]. I told her let me think some more and I'll write down and then you come back again. I thought she was doing a project, but she said no, she just thought she'd better do something, while I'm still alive. 'Cause since my second sister and my brother died, those below don't know much about all of this stuff.

HY: Well, I'm curious who else your father's customers were.

HI: Well, Raymond C. Brown and the superintendent of public [instruction]. I remember one incident one year when I was at Ka'ahumanu—I wonder, I think I still have some—Wentworth & Smith was the arithmetic [textbook] we used. The school did not have copies but I think he asked the superintendent. He brought a copy to him and gave me at home so I could study at home, math, 'cause I was, well, in fact I was math major at the university, too.

HY: You were good in math from . . .

HI: From the very beginning I was. I never took any of those subjects at McKinley because I was gearing for college so I took what they used to call the classical course. They had classical and science, I think. They're funny names.

HY: What is that?

HI: And gee, I think I finished high school in three years too because I used to go to summer school. Then when I went to the university—technically I was in the class of '28 at McKinley—then I went to the university, and I went all summer so I finished in 1931 but I belonged to the class of '32.

HY: Because you were doing your fifth year . . .

HI: I did my fifth year in '32. In fact, I have my certificate somewhere there. They gave secondary teaching certificates then, you know, the department. Mine is number two. I don't know who is number one is, I never found out.

HY: Well, I want to ask you some more about that neighborhood you grew up in as a child on King Street.

HI: Oh, King Street, I remember quite a bit about that.

HY: What were some of the other families in your neighborhood? And businesses?

HI: The corner was a rental. You see, all that side of the street were all rental units. We owned half of the block, Palm Drive. See, we were at King [Street] and Palm Drive. Young Street is in the back and we owned half of that. My father recommended another Hiu family to buy. The people who finally moved to Kula bought the area in front of our place on King Street and this other Hiu family bought the back. They spelled their name H-I-U. In fact I don't know if there's any of them left.

HY: What about businesses in that area, other businesses in that area besides your store?

HI: Oh we had the store there. There was no business in that area then, all residential.

HY: Just homes.

HI: Uh huh. Old-fashioned grocery stores, they sold everything. The *poi.*

HY: Did you folks sell *poi,* too?

HI: Yeah, used to come in big barrel. They put it on *ti* leaf.

HY: That's how you would sell it?

HI: It was the undiluted *poi.* The *poi* you buy now is so diluted. It's water and you pay two dollars for just one pound.

HY: Do know where you got your *poi?* Who you bought it from?

HI: Let's see, right behind McKinley High School, there used to be O'ahu Poi Factory.

HY: Oh, that's right, yeah, yeah.

HI: You remember? So we used to get it from there. They used to deliver it in a barrel. We used to sell quite a bit of it. Because I just remember, we had a pail of water and that scoop. Every time they come, scoop it onto a *ti* leaf, wrap it up and put it into a paper bag. That was until, I guess, now, sanitation and all that. (Chuckles) They would never allow people to sell *poi* that way.

HY: Yeah, the health regulations are different now. What about some of the other families in your neighborhood?

HI: Well, it was all relatives. Across the street was the Hiu people who stayed there just not too long. Then they moved to Kula and farmed. Then the next door, the boys, they had a lot of boys. One of them worked at City Mill [Company], and another one worked at von Hamn-Young [Company], and then one went to Moloka'i.

HY: Mostly Chinese families in that area? All Chinese?

HI: Yeah, and the ones in the back were the Hius, too. H-I-U. My father sold them that land. They had one, two older girls. I think they're gone now. One boy was my classmate, Walter. There was another guy who used to own the typewriter company. I don't know what typewriter company. He was a typewriter technician. The family across, city and county. He worked for the city and county, Benny Hiu. What the heck did he do? I don't know, accounting department I think. I think he is dead, too. He's gone too. But my family, only my brother and second and third. The rest of us are still around. The youngest is—1934, sixty-six [years old], right?

HY: That's your youngest sibling?

HI: That's the youngest.

HY: So there is a generation, more than a generation—well, about a generation apart.

So, I'm wondering, too, about, you know, you did so much work for the family businesses. What kind of household chores did you do? Just regular chores.

HI: Wash clothes. I did all the washing in the bathtub and the wooden scrub board for years and years. Do that early in the morning and hang it up, and then go to school. And my mother would be in the store. After school I would come back and take care of the store while she went inside the house. So I worked hard.

HY: You think you had other special responsibilities, being the oldest?

HI: Well, as I said, I didn't have to cook. My mother did all the cooking. All I did was take care of the store and keep the books. I used to wash clothes every morning until the kids got older. I said, "You guys do your own washing." No washing machines then.

HY: Now, you said your dad made suits. How were you folks clothed? Did you make your own?

HI: We sewed our own. My mother used to sew for us.

HY: Did you learn any of that from your mother?

HI: Yeah, and that's why I make most of my own clothes. Make my own *mu'umu'u*s. But now they buy. I have all bought *mu'umu'u*s now.

HY: Let's see, maybe you can talk—I guess I wanted to ask you a little bit more about the neighborhood and the children that you played with, if you had any time to play. It didn't sound like you had much.

HI: Oh, this guy Bill Jones, he was captain of the fire department. That corner family.

HY: He was a childhood playmate?

HI: Yeah. Billy Jones, we used to call him. I can't think of her name, but further up the lane she was a Shriners' [Hospital] patient. *Haole* girl, I forget her name. My son, when he was born, had a neck thing and I used to take him to the Shriners', too. So I told him, every time Shriners' come for donations, we have to give Shriners' 'cause they took care of him when he was young.

In fact, when I first got married, that was in '32, my family was still there. They were there until quite late. Let's see, when did my father die? Because after my father died, we still ran that store for a few more years. My mother. . . . That's kind of fuzzy. The younger ones would know, 'cause after 1932 I got the married, so I was out of the family.

HY: What kind of games did you play as a child?

HI: Hopscotch, jump rope—that double aisle?

HY: Oh, it's two jump ropes.

HI: Two jump ropes. And jacks. Oh, we used to bring jacks to school and we get them taken away if they catch us. (Laughs) Hopscotch.

(Telephone rings. Taping stops, then resumes.)

HY: Okay, you were talking about your games that you played, childhood games.

HI: Like hopscotch. You know, *jan ken a po.* And then you run so many steps. I don't even remember that. Paper and stone and all of that. We used to play in that lane. Those two I remember. Oh, we used to go to Thomas Square and pick up those red beads. You throw and then flip the seeds to see that they connect and you pick up the one that you catch.

HY: The red seeds?

HI: Red beads. You know, they still have those trees down at Thomas Square.

HY: And you would do what it them?

HI: We'd throw them in a pile and then you have a king, what we called our king. And then we start with that. We just flip it with your finger. If it connects, you pick up the one you connect.

HY: Oh, so you try and acquire as many . . .

HI: As many [beads as possible]. I don't think anybody plays that. I don't think anybody ever really knew. I even forgot about it until you just asked.

HY: Did have a name, that game?

HI: Oh, I don't remember the name. I know we used to play jacks. You pick—you know how to play jacks—one, one, one; then you pick two, two, two; three, three, three; then you go around the world. I don't even remember all of it. I wonder, do they still sell jacks?

HY: Yeah, I think so. But I don't see kids play that.

HI: I don't know.

HY: But I think they still have. But I'm wondering about, when you grew up, did you grow up speaking both English and Chinese?

HI: And Chinese. My sister, the one just below me, she never did learn to speak much Chinese. But I had to because I had to communicate with my father.

HY: Did he know English too or was his language . . .

HI: In English. He spoke. How do you suppose he would sell to the firemen and policemen?

HY: He knew enough to communicate.

HI: Yeah, he knew enough to do business. Then, as I said, I was on the honor roll at university. I didn't tell him. One of his customers told him about it. So he came home and asked me and I told him, yeah. You know, it was nothing to me then. Because I used to always make the honor roll when I was in school.

HY: So was schooling important to your family? Or was that something that you just had?

HI: No, no. Every—let's see, me, Emma, Frances. . . . In fact my niece, my sixth sister came with her, called me up one day. She wanted to quit school and I forced her to go to the university. Now she appreciates. She remembered. She was telling me, "Yeah, I didn't want to continue school." If not for me, she would not have graduated from the university.

HY: And you said your mother had a limited formal education.

HI: Yeah, just the third grade in Kohala. She went to the public schools. Then I don't know what.

HY: But was schooling something that was important to your mother, too, to have her children. . . .

HI: I don't know whether she made—she didn't care less what we did. If we want to go school, go. If you didn't want to go to school, work. That's why, when my sister took commercial at McKinley High School, they offered her a job before she even graduated. In fact, she went to the job before graduation exercises. They needed somebody so badly. She worked with them till she retired. Then she transferred to the retirement system.

HY: I'm wondering about your family businesses during the depression. I know you were—this is jumping ahead in time a little bit.

HI: The depression was what years? Twenty. . . .

HY: Well, I guess it began in '29. Yeah, was in your early college or in your college years.

HI: No, we still sold.

HY: As far as you know, it didn't. . . .

HI: Yeah, we still had the grocery store.

HY: Yeah. So you did well, still, in the depression?

HI: Well, in fact, the store never made a profit, but it fed us. My father would buy fish and fowl from Chinatown. Every Sunday, it had to be either two chickens or two ducks.

HY: I want to go back again. Your mother grew up in Kohala. I'm wondering if her parents were immigrants to Hawai'i?

HI: Yes, they worked on the sugar plantations, her mother and father.

HY: On the Big Island.

HI: They stayed in Kohala for one or two years and then they came to O'ahu, Honolulu. See, my mother's brother, the two older brothers, were cooks on the ships. Let's see, Henry, the brother, then my mother, then my aunt, Annie. My youngest uncle went to college and he became a dentist. Yeah, there were five.

HY: And what was your mother's family . . .

HI: That's my mother's family, five.

HY: What is her family name?

HI: Ling, L-I-N-G.

HY: I'm going to need to turn the tape over.

END OF SIDE ONE

SIDE TWO

HY: Okay. So your mother's family relocated to O'ahu.

HI: From Kohala they came to O'ahu. For a time they were staying. . . . It's kind of funny. I think for a time they were staying at Waipahu, too, before they moved. They must have moved to town in 1910. I mean, because I was born in 1910. And then, we were living on Vineyard Street and she was doing all the handwork then. I know we were, in 1915, in King Street because my brother was born there. I was born at Kauluwela Lane, my sister was born at Vineyard Street, and then all the rest were born at King Street area. And no doctors. You know, K.F. Li? You hear about them [K.F. Li & Kong] all the time. She was a midwife then. She delivered me. My grandmother delivered the rest of her [grand] children. I mean, the rest of my siblings.

HY: At home. Maybe we can move on to talking about your schooling, when you first went to . . .

HI: Ka'ahumanu School. I was there from the first to the eighth grade. I finished in '24 and went to McKinley.

HY: And you said you were good in math from the very beginning, yeah.

HI: Oh, I still remember. Not only math, English. There's an eighth-grade English teacher, Mrs. [Kathryn M.] Winter. Oh, wait. Oswald. You know Bushnell?

HY: Yeah, Ozzie Bushnell?

HI: His mother [Hulda J. Bushnell] was my first-grade teacher. But Winter was my seventh-, eighth-grade English teacher. Because we had, when we got there, there were three. One taught English, and another one taught social studies, another one, math, I think.

But you know, when we were kids, young, we used to have flag drill, the whole school. Once a month, I think.

HY: What is that?

HI: The whole school would come out and pledge allegiance to the flag. We'd have a program. I'd have to stand in the front of everybody. Before they bring the flag, I used to stand and say, "Hats off." Along the street there comes a flare of bugles and a ruffle of drums. And then, "Hats off, the flag is passing by." Everybody would have to stand at attention. (Chuckles) Then they go on their way. I think we had that once a week or once a month, I forget.

But she was a very good English teacher. That's why, when I went to . . .

HY: You're talking about . . .

HI: Mrs. Winter. But Oswald Bushnell's mother was my—I think she was my first- and second-grade teacher. She was a very good teacher, too, if I remember her. I had Miss Hatch in the seventh or eighth grade, I think. But when I came to the eighth grade, she was an older person, but she was a very good English teacher. I still know how to do sentence work.

HY: Diagramming?

HI: Pronoun, verb, adverb, adjective. We learned all of that. You know the kids are not taught that now.

HY: I don't know. You mean, diagramming sentences?

HI: Yeah.

HY: Yeah, I don't know if they still teach that.

HI: I don't think they do. Oh, and that was McKinley High School.

HY: And then you went to McKinley.

HI: Then I went to the university.

HY: Do you remember teachers from McKinley High School?

HI: Yeah, I took physics and the courses where there were only two girls. I'm still wondering what happened to the other girl. Her name was Shimada and I've lost track of her.

HY: Shimada?

HI: She and I were the only two. When I was at the university, I was only one of two girls in the math classes.

HY: Why do you think that is? It's still somewhat true.

HI: I don't know. I guess the girls were stupid in math before, I don't know. But physics, I never had chemistry and that's my only regret. I didn't take any chemistry. I took biology, zoology.

HY: You're talking about the university? At UH?

HI: Mm hmm. I never took chemistry, as I said. In fact, I almost took engineering. But at that time, there were no women engineers. Now I know a lot of girls who are engineers. So I had to settle for teaching. And I majored in math.

HY: Were you discouraged from going into engineering?

HI: I don't know. Even at the university, I was only one of two girls in all the math classes. I took engineering, math—Math 106, and differentials, and calculus, and I've forgotten what. I've still got some of the textbooks on the shelf there.

HY: Well, when you were at McKinley were there other activities that you were involved in besides your academic work?

HI: Where at?

HY: McKinley, your high school days?

HI: Yeah. I can't find the picture. I was going to look for it. I had an album. We had what you call the girls' auxiliary. There was a MCC boys' club, the service club, and there was a girls' auxiliary. They had tough initiations, too.

HY: Like what?

HI: Oh, we had to dress for the initiation. You had to dress in colonial uniforms. I remember wearing that big hoop thing.

HY: To school?

HI: At McKinley. But, as I say, I don't know if they have very many clubs at McKinley now.

HY: What does that stand for, MCC?

HI: McKinley Citizenship Club or something like that.

HY: What did that club do? What kinds of activities?

HI: Oh, we used to have meetings. We used to, in the school when they had projects, we would go out and man the hold. Watch the hallways, make sure the kids behaved. They called it the McKinley Citizenship Club, MCC. There was a science club, too, I think. But this one stands in my mind because we had to go through all the hoopla.

HY: Were there other parts of the initiation besides wearing a costume to school?

HI: I don't know. I remember we even had to lead—you know that Punchbowl was built by passing the stones one by one up the hill from down by Ward [Avenue]. The Old Plantation owned by the Ward sisters? In fact, somebody recently wrote an article. I remember they used to have a rock wall and it used to be flat. And because they did not want the McKinley High School [students]—the bus stop was right there, too, I think—to sit there, they went and they cemented sharp stones all along there. I still remember that, how nasty they were. 'Cause the students used to sit to wait there. They didn't want the students sitting there so they put cement and they put sharp stones sticking up on that wall. I'll never forget that. That was in the [19]20s. I finished in '28. They were horrible. Because McKinley High School was right next to Old Plantation. Now we have the HIC [Honolulu International Center, which was then replaced by Blaisdell Center] there.

HY: What other, say, social activities did people do?

HI: That's about all. When we were at Ka'ahumanu, I think once a semester or something they used to have a get-together, have dance for all the eighth- and ninth-graders. At McKinley, there were not. . . . I just remember the McKinley Citizenship Club because we used to do projects. Red Cross wanted us to do something, we would do for the community. They also had the Home Economics Club but I was not interested in that, so. And they had Science Club.

HY: Were you involved in Science Club? No?

HI: I told you, math. I just took two years of science courses at McKinley to have enough credits to enter the university. But I had four years of math at McKinley, trigonometry. Now they teach calculus at 'Iolani [School] to the juniors, I think, or sophomores. Because one day my grandson said, "Oh, you took?"

I said, "Yeah, I had that at the university." Because I took calculus at the university.

HY: So you said you always thought you were going to go to college.

HI: I insisted.

HY: I think you mentioned last time that your father . . .

HI: My father wanted me to. . . . Well, he didn't want me to go to college, but I insisted on going, so I went. My sister, way down, number five or six, she wanted to quit. But I dragged her in and then made her go to college. Now, in retrospect, she's happy because she got a good job at the labor department, at the state labor department, before she retired.

HY: Do you know why your dad was somewhat reluctant?

HI: He wanted me to do business.

HY: He wanted you to work in the family business?

HI: Mm hmm. But I did both. I went to university, and I studied. When I finished classes—I only went to school half a day. The first class, I think, was 7:30 [AM] till 11:30 [AM]. Because you had classes Monday, Wednesday, and Friday; and Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturdays. I don't know how they do it now.

HY: Not too many Saturday classes.

HI: Then when I finished, I went back for fifth year. I did my fifth year in 1932.

HY: So after you finished classes at 11:30 you would come back home?

HI: Come home on the bus. The bus ran on Beretania. I had to walk home from Beretania to King Street.

HY: And then you worked in the store?

HI: Worked in the store.

HY: Was there ever a possibility that you might go to a different university?

HI: Nobody went to a Mainland university then. They only sent my brother to China. My younger sisters, one went to Iowa. Only the two youngest, number twelve and thirteen, went to Mainland colleges. I had a younger brother. We sent him, but he gave up after one year.

HY: Do you remember the process of applying to the university? Do you remember much about that?

HI: Gee, I don't quite remember. All we had to do was to take our high school diploma or something. I don't know, I don't remember. All I know, I was accepted.

HY: What was your initial reaction to the university. What were your impressions?

HI: We had to walk, take the bus every morning, and take the bus home. Not like now. They have cars. They're fighting for parking space and everything else.

HY: Did you feel like you were well prepared going into UH with your high school education?

HI: Yeah, I had enough credits to qualify. I was looking through this [yearbook]. I remember the name of the guy—Law of Diminishing [Returns]—[Merton K.]Cameron.

HY: He was your math teacher?

HI: No, he was the economics I teacher. And [Thayne M.] Livesay was my education [teacher]. I took lot of education courses from him. Oh, those courses were big, too.

HY: Like how many?

HI: Oh, those were small[er]—sixty. But I know the economics class was about hundred-something in the class. He was a very good lecturer, though. Always joking. He [said], "Don't you forget the Law of Diminishing Returns." (Chuckles) I still visualize him.

HY: He left quite an impression on you.

HI: Mm hmm [yes].

HY: So did you find, relative to what you were used to, whether your courses were easy or difficult?

HI: Oh, was easy for me. I mean, as I said . . .

HY: School was easy for you.

HI: . . . it was never difficult. In fact, as I said, I preferred the math classes to the other courses, lecture courses, because something to do. Well, I told you why I didn't go into engineering because there were no girl engineers then.

HY: Did you just feel kind of intimidated being the only girl or . . .

HI: No, I would say, most classes there were more boys than girls. As I said, in most of my math classes, there were only two girls. I remember her name was Shimada or something and I lost track of her after I graduated. And then taking education was the next best thing I could do, I guess.

HY: Was there something equivalent to guidance counselors that advised you on which direction you should go?

HI: No, there were no such things then. In fact, I worked one year, let's see, I worked one year at the

[Territorial] Board of Health, too.

HY: While you were at UH?

HI: No, no, after I finished. Let me think now. I remember doing statistical work at the board of health. I worked one year there while waiting for my teaching job. Who the heck was the advisor? When they called me to go to Laupāhoehoe [School], they wanted me to stay at board of health. And I asked him. He says, "Well," he says, "you trained to be a teacher." The chief there then advised me to go. But I was lucky. I only stayed one year at Laupāhoehoe. Then I came down and taught at Kalākaua [Intermediate School]. My husband's classmate had five or six girls, and he was teaching at Kalākaua. He wanted to go to Laupāhoehoe, to the country, take his family. I taught three years at Kalākaua, and he taught three years at Laupāhoehoe.

HY: And then at some point you returned to Laupāhoehoe.

HI: He taught there till just before the [1946] tidal wave, I think. His kids—well, he had all girls. Then I went to Farrington [High School, 1944–50]. In 1950 I had my last baby. There was a big gap, 1934 till 1950.

HY: I want to talk some more about UH.

HI: Yeah. Hawai'i Hall, that's where we all congregated. We had most of our classes there. Let's see, Hawai'i Hall, Gartley [Hall]. Hawai'i Hall is in the center. We had most of our classes there. We used to go down to the basement. [John] Donaghho, he was my math teacher.

HY: Who would you say was most influential on you as a teacher?

HI: Oh, I don't know.

HY: Either good or bad.

HI: Oh, I wouldn't. . . . I look through here and I remember Ruth Yap. She was one of my math teachers. She married Elvin Hoy. I recall his name, because I was talking about him the other day. I took math from him, too.

HY: Now, it was unusual to have a female math teacher.

HI: She was a Yap girl, Ruth Yap.

HY: Was this the Yap family that lived. . . .

HI: Yeah, [William] Kwai Fong Yap. The father was the one who. . . .

HY: Founded the university.

HI: Founded the university. Not founded. He went to the legislature and [petitioned to expand the College of Hawai'i into a university]. And she was a math teacher.

HY: So she was part of that family then.

HI: She was the oldest girl in that family or the second girl.

HY: Was that the Yap family that lived in your neighborhood? Or was that different?

HI: No, no, a different one. In fact, Hannah [Yap] was my classmate. I know them because they're members of our church. Kwai Fong Yap was.

HY: Well, that's something we didn't talk about in your childhood is the importance of your church. Were you active?

HI: Well, we just used to go every Sunday. We lived close enough, King Street, and we used to walk to Sunday school.

HY: What church is that?

HI: First Chinese Church [of Christ]. It's right across the street from McKinley High School. I still go there.

HY: Now, is that a Christian church?

HI: Protestant.

HY: And your whole family went?

HI: No, just me, my brother, Frances, Charlotte. Four of us are members there now. The rest have gone to different churches.

HY: Well, did you go to church there without your parents?

HI: We used to go there for Sunday school.

HY: How is it that you became interested and it was not part of your parents' routine?

HI: Well see, my father was a member when the church was at Fort Street. When we moved to King Street in 1915, I was five years old then. Next door, the cousin who lived there, she used to go to St. Elizabeth's Church. I used to go there for about two or three years. Afterwards, we came to First Chinese. As I said, five of us, we were all baptized at First Chinese Church. Now, there's me, Charlotte, Frances, Wilfred. There are just four of us 'cause my other sister turned Catholic. She married a Catholic, so she turned Catholic. My brother went to St. Louis [College, currently named St. Louis School] so he turned Catholic.

HY: So your father did belong to church.

HI: Yeah, we all. . . . He belonged to the First Chinese Church.

HY: I wanted to ask you about some of your classmates at UH. You said, there was you and another girl. . . .

HI: Girl, who was in all the math classes. Not too many. Mark Westgate was from Punahou, I think.

He used to be [involved] in student [government]. Actually, when I was at the university, I was not too involved with the extracurricular activities. 'Cause as I told you, I had to go to school, come home, watch the store. So actually that was my work even though it was family.

HY: Well last time, you mentioned you had some feelings about the sororities. You weren't interested.

HI: Yeah, they asked me to join and I couldn't care less, you know what I mean? Yang Chung Hui, the Chinese sorority. Then there was some kind of rivalry [with] Te Chih Sheh, that group. They're still in existence, I think. They're kind of snottish, too, I'm telling you.

HY: So you just weren't interested?

HI: I just didn't care to associate with them.

HY: Do you know what the rivalry was about?

HI: I don't remember why they formed the second one. Yang Chung Hui was the original Chinese club there for the Chinese women. I was asked to join, but I told them I didn't have time for activities. Let them have cars and they were driving. And here, I had to take the bus to school.

HY: Was that club for those students, well, from fairly well-off families that they could afford to have cars?

HI: I don't quite remember. I know my good friend and I used to go on the bus. She became a member. She died quite awhile—oh, she died soon after we graduated. I think she died of cancer somehow, I don't know. I was real fortunate. I had lung cancer in 1986 and I'm still alive. They took my right lung, the bottom half, off. I don't have it.

HY: But you're healthy now.

HI: Every time I go to the doctor's he charge me. I used to have to go for x-ray every six months.

HY: Were you ever a smoker?

HI: My husband used to smoke cigars and that's how, they think, how I got it.

HY: I'm wondering, did you meet your husband at UH?

HI: No, he was a Phillips—I don't think that's in existence now—Phillips Commercial School. He sold cars. So he sold my father a Model-T and he had to teach me how to drive the car. So that's how we met.

HY: You know, you said you weren't interested in sororities and stuff like that. What were some of the social activities that you . . .

HI: Football games. I went to every football game. More the sports. We used to go to the Honolulu Stadium. I used to attend every football game.

HY: That was pretty close to where you lived, too.

HI: Mm hmm. The bus—you practically don't have to pay your fare. It was so crowded, the guy cannot collect [the fare] before we roll. We used to buy the season ticket. If I didn't do anything else, I would get the football ticket. Of course, there was a whole bunch of us, we'd go to football games. I think it came—the football ticket came—with a whole bunch of things, the ASUH [Associated Students of the University of Hawai'i] dues or something. I don't remember.

HY: What about your education teachers? Were there ones that were particularly influential or you feel had mentored you?

HI: Oh, they were good. I had Livesay. I don't remember all the teachers. [Paul] Bachman, Bachman taught us poly sci.

HY: What was he like?

HI: He was political sciences. And Ruth Hoy, Ruth Yap, I had her for several years, math class, because she taught all math classes.

HY: Well, let me ask you about her. What kind of a teacher was she?

HI: Well, I learned.

HY: She was a good teacher?

HI: I think so. Hoy was another math teacher, I think. I think he was in the math department. That's how they met.

HY: Do you remember what kind of a teacher Bachman was?

HI: Oh, he was very good. In fact, I took several courses from him. Well, they have a hall named after him.

HY: That's right. May I ask you about the ethnicity of your classes.

HI: They were mostly Orientals. Japanese, Japanese outnumbered everybody. The girl who was with me, Shimada, till today, I still don't know what became of her.

HY: So, mostly Japanese, some Chinese.

HI: You know, actually, not too many Chinese students. You know why? Because most of them went to the Mainland to go to college. But now, do you know what the trend is? They go to the Mainland—in fact, my nephews [went] to the Mainland, spent four years there—[and] they're coming back to the UH medical school. Why? Because they have residents' tuition here. On the Mainland, tuition is what? Eight thousand dollars a quarter or semester? I know because I had to pay for my grandson. He finished at [Thomas] Jefferson [University] in Pennsylvania.

HY: What about things like what would you do after the football games?

HI: I would come home. As I said, we'd get on the [Honolulu] Rapid Transit bus and stand all the way home. The bus stop was right in front of our store. So there was never any problem getting transportation to football games.

HY: What about parties and dances and things like that?

HI: They used to have dances, but nighttime so we couldn't go to too many of those. Those were mostly attended by guys with cars.

HY: I'm wondering if you had any difficulties or conflicts with your teachers?

HI: No, I don't remember any.

HY: Or what about other students?

HI: We were tame kids then. We're not like these kids now. You know what I mean. And the boys, like in math class, the boys would help us if we got stuck and all of that.

HY: I remember just kind of recently there was an article about cheating problems at UH in the, gee, I believe it was engineering. Was that ever an issue with students?

HI: I don't remember that as an issue because we were on our honor. In fact, if I remember, we had to sign at the end of an exam. They used to give us those blue books. They still do?

HY: Those blue composition books?

HI: Yeah, those. We had to buy those to take the exam. They gave us the true false questions. I think when we took economics, we had to do a written composition test. I don't know, I don't remember.

HY: You were saying you had to sign. . . .

HI: Yeah. I think we used to sign a pledge that I have neither received help or something during this exam. I faintly remember something like that.

HY: Saying that you had completed it on your own?

HI: Yeah. I remember some kind of a pledge. We just sign our names or something, I forget.

HY: What about scholarships? Were you able to make use of anything like that?

HI: You mean scholarship for tuition? The tuition was so low everybody was able to pay it, I guess.

HY: No problem?

HI: No problem.

HY: And did you ever have other jobs while you were at UH besides working at the store?

HI: No, I just worked at home. Talking about that, I think it costs something like thirty-five thousand to dedicate a scholarship at the UH now. 'Cause I'm thinking of doing one in my will, and my lawyer is getting all the information. So eventually, if you're still around, there may be a scholarship there in my name.

HY: Wow. So I'm wondering, you know, when you're taking all these education classes, if you're thinking, if you're developing some kind of philosophy about teaching while you're there? You know, having been always a good student and taking education classes.

HI: I tell you one experience I had. I had this student who wasn't behaving and I tried to make him behave. He was epileptic, I think. He said, "You want me throw a fit?"

I said, "Go ahead, throw a fit. See if I care." And that stopped him.

I mean, talking about behavior. 'Cause they never used to have disability classes. Now they're having that case in the newspapers now about the disability [Felix Consent Decree]. I don't know why, because of that education act they say that you have to in the public schools. I think they should have special schools for those disabled kids. I mean, personally, that's what I believe. Because I had that experience with that kid who was in my class at Kalākaua.

HY: Well, were there discipline problems that you can recall when you were student?

HI: I don't remember any. Well, they're all grown-ups.

HY: Because sometimes I hear about other people talk about how very, very strict classrooms were. And sometimes there were, you know, corporal punishment was allowed in the early days.

HI: At university?

HY: No, not at university.

HI: At high school?

HY: Yeah, in the lower grades.

HI: I don't remember. In fact, some of the teachers used to slap the hand. But you cannot [now]. I don't know, that's my only experience with this kid who I tried to make him behave and he threatened and said, "You want me have a fit?"

HY: What kind of [other] behavioral problems did you run across?

HI: You mean, when I was teaching?

HY: Yeah.

HI: That was the one that I recall and I still remember till this day. I often wonder what happened to that boy.

HY: Well, we're right at the end of this tape. Turn this off.

END OF INTERVIEW